

not to be expected that the sufferings of the destitute would wring their hearts with social compunction.

The most curious feature in the whole discussion, and that which is most sharply in contrast with the long debate on pauperism carried on in the sixteenth century, was the resolute refusal to admit that society had any responsibility for the causes of distress. Tudor divines and statesmen had little mercy for idle rogues. But

the former always, and the latter ultimately, regarded

pauperism primarily as a social phenomenon produced

by economic dislocation, and the embarrassing question put by the genial Harrison—"at whose handes shall

the bloude of these men be required ? "I**—was

never far from the minds even of the most cynical.

Their successors after the Restoration were apparently

quite unconscious that it was even conceivable that

there might be any other cause of poverty than the

moral failings of the poor. The practical conclusion

to be drawn from so comfortable a creed was at once

extremely simple and extremely agreeable. It was not

to find employment under the Act of 1601, for to do

that was only "to render the poor more bold/" It was

to surround the right to relief with obstacles such

as those contained in the Act of 1662, to give it, when

it could not be avoided, in a workhouse or house of

correction, and, for the rest, to increase the demand for labour by reducing wages.

The grand discovery of a commercial age, that relief might be so administered as not merely to relieve, but also to deter, still remained to be made by Utilitarian philosophers. But the theory that distress was due, not to economic circumstances, but to what the Poor ..Law Commissioners of 1834 called "individual improvidence and vice," was firmly established, and the criticism on the Elizabethan system which was to inspire the new Poor Law had already been formulated. The essence of that system was admirably expressed a century later by a Scottish divine, as " the principle